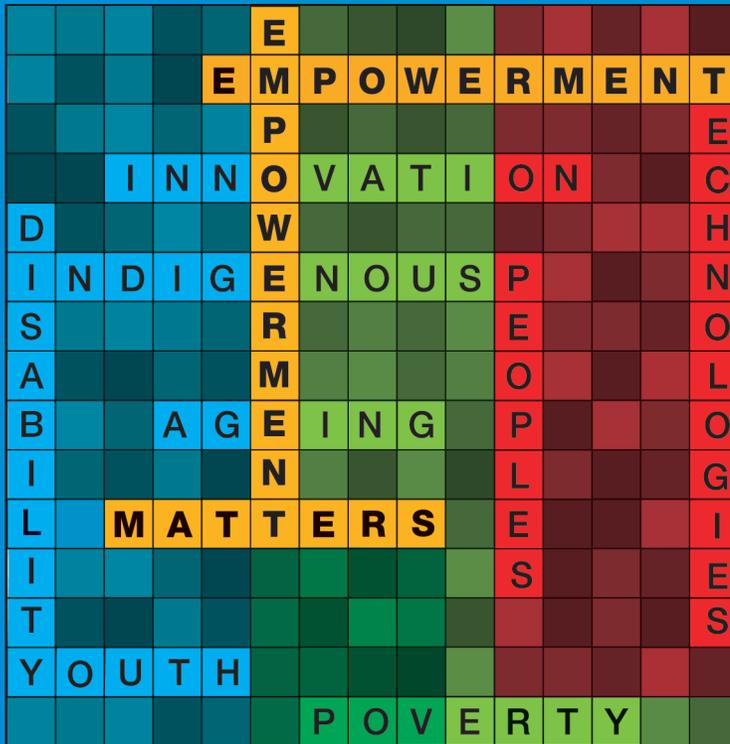


# Empowerment:



What does  
it mean  
to YOU?

United Nations  
Social Development Network



Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Division for Social Policy and Development



## Remarks of UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon at the International Conference on “People’s Empowerment and Development”, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 5 August 2012.

### DESA

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the United Nations Secretariat is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which Member States of the United Nations draw to review common problems and take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and (iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy principles developed at United Nations conferences and summits into programmatic frameworks at the country level and; through technical assistance, it helps build national capacities.

### DSPD

The Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) is part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the United Nations Secretariat. The Division seeks to strengthen international cooperation for social development, particularly in the areas of poverty eradication, productive employment and decent work and the social inclusion of older persons, youth, family, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, persons in situations of conflict and other groups or persons marginalized from society and development.

### Note

The views expressed in the present report are those of the authors and do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations, particularly concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The term “country” as used in the text of this report also refers, as appropriate, to territories or areas. Mention of the names of firms and commercial products does not imply the endorsement of the United Nations.

This International Conference on People’s Empowerment and Development comes at a particularly opportune time. The recently concluded United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, adopted an action-oriented outcome document on “*The Future We Want*”. Empowerment is critical for attaining that future.

Empowerment is not new to the United Nations. Our long-standing efforts to protect human rights, promote job creation and obtain improved access to water, sanitation, energy, education and health care all have empowerment at their core — the goal of ensuring that people have the opportunities they need to live better lives in dignity and security. But we are also exploring new frontiers of empowerment. With the establishment of UN-Women, the effort to empower the world’s women and achieve gender equality received an important boost. We are also focusing greater attention on empowering the next generation through our work on youth. These are two critical planks of my action agenda for the next five years.

By looking at empowerment and development together, you are focusing welcome attention on issues that matter most in the lives of families and their communities — opportunities for decent work, the chance to enjoy basic services and participate fully in the political life of their countries.

These aspirations are embodied in many national laws and international agreements. Measures to ensure compliance with these laws and agreements should be an integral part of development strategies.

We must also harness the power of new communications tools and technologies. Access to information is a key means for enabling the citizenry to hold Governments and others accountable.

This international conference is an important opportunity to explore these and other issues. Your deliberations can also contribute to those of the *Commission for Social Development*, which next year will address the issue of promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all.

Empowerment is a key means to achieving sustainable development and other vital goals. But it also has a value in and of itself.

Thank you for your commitment to this effort. I wish you a productive conference.

## Message from Mr. Wu Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Remarks at the “Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Empowerment of People in Achieving Poverty Eradication, Social Integration and Full Employment and Decent Work for All” New York, 10-12 September 2012.



Excellences  
Distinguished Experts  
Colleagues,

I am delighted to join you at this expert group meeting. Normally, Under-Secretaries-General do not speak at expert group meetings. They are for experts to attend. Many would argue that USGs are no longer considered experts. Despite this, I took the decision to come and share with you a few personal thoughts, because I think empowerment is an extremely important matter. It has significant policy implications.

Empowerment is critical to poverty eradication and to development. Indeed, I would even say that any long-term solution to poverty must start with empowerment.

The poor and vulnerable may need short-term assistance in times of crisis. But we should not underestimate the power of initiative and ownership. More often than not, poor people do not need charity. They need policies and tools that empower them to lead productive lives.

In this regard, I want to compliment the organizers for selecting empowerment as the focus of this meeting.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June this year, also known as Rio+20, adopted an action-oriented outcome document on “*The Future We Want*”.

Many of the actions set forth in this historic outcome will advance people’s empowerment and development .... through:

- poverty reduction;
- job creation;
- improved access to water, sanitation and energy;
- public services such as education and better health care; and
- social integration overall.

This expert group meeting is a timely opportunity for a thorough examination of how people can contribute to these efforts. The UN System is now mobilized to work together toward a future we want – toward a global agenda beyond 2015, with sustainable development at its core. In order to attain that future, we need to ensure that people have the opportunities they need to live better lives.

As a start, it is important to focus on actions that can institutionalize measures for empowerment, through improved access to resources, public services, including education and training, and through income generating opportunities, especially for women and youth.

## Message from Ms. Daniela Bas Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development of UNDESA



Indeed, people's aspirations are embodied in many national laws and international agreements. Measures to ensure compliance with these laws and agreements should be an integral part of development strategies.

At the same time, we must also harness the power of new communications tools and technologies. Access to information is a key means in holding Governments and others accountable. It also helps level the playing field for the young generation. Other tools are vital in helping to engage people more directly. Micro-credit programmes are among these, which help to facilitate greater empowerment opportunities for youth and women. Countries around the world continue to celebrate the 2012 International Year of Cooperatives, and, indeed, the benefits that cooperatives deliver to the communities they serve. The Year has raised public awareness of the power of cooperatives to advance economic and social development. And it has been particularly successful in helping to promote cooperatives as empowering, member-driven and community-oriented enterprises. Your deliberations on these and other issues can contribute to those of the *Commission for Social Development*, which next year will address the issue of promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all.

I am sure that your conclusions will help the *Commission* advance our understanding of the role of empowerment even further.

Going forward, let us be very clear: Empowerment is a key means to achieving sustainable development and other vital goals. But it also has a value in and of itself. We must not lose sight of the need to empower all individuals and groups on our shared planet. In the coming months, the United Nations will elaborate on a United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. Sustainable development agenda will be at the core of this post-2015 agenda. As you know, sustainable development has three inter-linked dimensions – economic, social and environmental. The social dimension has been considered weak in relation to the other two. Moreover, unlike economic growth, the social dimension is more difficult to quantify. But it is no less important. I hope this expert group meeting will take this into account when you discuss empowerment.

I wish you success in your deliberations and I look forward to the summary of this meeting. I promise you that I will read it from cover to cover.

Thank you.

When I was six years old, I became paraplegic due to a very rare tumor and in those years children with disabilities were not allowed to attend ordinary school. I succeeded because my parents and the director of the primary school understood that I was the same Daniela as before. They empowered me.

Empowerment has many meanings. I think ultimately it is about people and the human potential. Empowerment does not have to be grand. Small successes can boost your self-confidence and really be empowering. I became, and I wanted to be again independent. I had to fight against stereotypes and prejudices and trust me, employment was not easy but at that point, I empowered myself.

Striving for development and seeking to empower others are very important. The *Commission for Social Development* knows it and decided to focus its next session on empowerment through the eradication of poverty, decent work and social integration.

We have a unique chance to contribute and to help share future policies that can have a major impact on people's empowerment across the globe.

*Empower Yourself and Inspire the World!*

Daniela Bas,  
Director

# Acknowledgment

The “**Definitions of Empowerment**” contained in this publication represent a collaborative effort, made possible by the answers received from people across the world on the theme of Empowerment. Their invaluable contributions were essential for the preparation of this publication.

In order to collect people’s ideas and experiences, the Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of UNDESA launched an on-line survey on “**Promoting Empowerment of People**”.

We were glad to receive tens and tens of responses from young individuals; persons with disabilities, older persons, and people working for various institutions and organizations committed to social development issues. Their keen interest on **Empowerment** reminded us about the growing importance of this topic in our society.

We welcomed and carefully screened all the answers from the on-line community, but due to the large volume of contributions, we were unable to include all of them.

They were all precious, since they provided a unique overview of what **Empowerment** means for people with different origins, cultures and languages.

The Division for Social Policy and Development is grateful for the many contributions received, which enabled readers of the **Empowerment** survey, to share and learn from their experiences and beliefs.

Thank you to all of you for making this possible!

# Introduction

**Empowerment** is not a new term to the United Nations. It is the process of enabling people to increase control over their lives, to gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives, to increase their resources and qualities and to build capacities to gain access, partners, networks, a voice, in order to gain control.

**Empowerment** is now increasingly used and connected to social development groups such as poor people, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and marginalized people.

The Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) has organized an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “**Promoting Empowerment of People in Achieving Poverty Eradication, Social Integration and Full Employment and Decent Work for All**” from 10 to 12 September 2012 in New York at the United Nations Headquarters. The meeting was convened to help prepare the priority theme for the 51st session of the *Commission for Social Development* in February 2013.

The meeting has decided that the most appropriate definition of **Empowerment** was as an iterative process with key components including an enabling environment that encourages popular participation in decision-making that affects the achievement of goals like poverty eradication, social integration and decent work for all as well as sustainable development.

DSDP has launched an online survey from 8 August to 5 September 2012 on “**Promoting Empowerment of People**”. It has received tens and tens of responses. The survey featured different definitions of Empowerment related to the enhancement of the capabilities of social groups including youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples to fully participate in all aspects of society and promoting enabling social, economic, cultural and political conditions that can help them take control of their own development and future.

This publication contains definitions of Empowerment selected from our survey, which is available online at the following link:

<http://social.un.org/empowerment>.

“Allowing every individual to make free choices and achieve the full of their capacities.”

**Ignacio Socias**

Director of International Relations  
International Federation for Family  
Development

“**Empowerment** is a process and an outcome. The process through which people attain knowledge and skills that will allow them to first acknowledge the need for a change, and then change something about their lives. It is a process of awakening certain potentials that allow people to take action, to voice and formulate the need, to speak, to advocate for themselves, or for others. The outcome maybe means simply being able to recognize and know the moment when and how to stand up for oneself or for others.”

**Bojana Beric**

Assistant Professor on Health Studies  
Monmouth University

“**Empowerment** means that those who become empowered have the ability to take control of their lives and fortunes with the help of government and civil society. In order to be empowered, both men and women must have the same rights and privileges and the same opportunities, especially in employment and decent work.”

**Maryann Tarantula**

United Nations Committee chairman  
Zonta International

“**Empowerment** means that people, individuals have a voice in making decisions for themselves and for society.”

**Donald Horowitz**

Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs

“**Empowerment** is supporting people in such a way as to enable them to accomplish goals that will improve life for all.”

**Eva Boone**

Ursuline Sisters



“To me **empowerment** is about three dimensions: a) how the individual or community perceive(s) and judge(s) their capacity to play a role, b) the desire to play a meaningful role in society and c) the spaces and opportunities created and provided for the capacity to come to play. The first step is about making people realize their potential, existing specific knowledge and expertise and strengthen their capacity in various areas in order for an individual or community to play a meaningful role in their own or their community/society's development and to make (life) choices. It's about the subjective feeling (trusting yourself) as well as the

discovery/realization of ones own capacities (based on the idea that absolutely everyone has something meaningful to contribute). The discovery of ones capacity and relevance for others can trigger a desire to actively shape ones environment. People feel empowered, because they realize that they can make a difference, which in turn makes them want to make a difference. A feeling of disempowerment often causes passivity. Moreover **empowerment** is of course related to the objective possibility and existing spaces to play a role and to be heard.”

**Simona Costanzo SOW**

Project Manager for the MDG/post  
2015 project  
United Nations Volunteers

“**Empowerment** is giving to people or groups the strength and knowledge needed to help them overcome their obstacles.”

**Nick Penland**

“Power to achieve political, social, and economic equality...”

**Kenneth Schadt**

History and Literature Tutor

“For me **empowering** means people socially integrated and have economic, social and political power irrespective of their life situation, economic conditions and physical disabilities.”

**Sr. Ursula Khalkho**

Ursuline Sisters of the Congregation  
of Tildonk

“Strategies and actions that increase peoples and/ or communities' autonomy and self-determination in improving their current and future life conditions, as well as changing political and socio-economic dominant and oppressive structures/ systems.”

**Salvatore Romagna**

Secretary General  
International Cultural Youth Exchange  
- ICYE

“**Empowerment** is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. This could be in various forms such as capacity building (trainings) as well as provision of resources in form of material and or financial support. It could also be the giving or delegation of power or authority to an individual or group giving them the ability/permission or enabling them to embark on or execute various intentions.”

**Martin Daka**

Archdiocese of Lusaka Health and  
Gender Coordinator  
Caritas Lusaka

“**Empowerment** is to give a person the confidence and education and where-with-all to be all that they can be.”

**Sandra Lincoln**

Society of the Holy Child Jesus,  
American Province  
Province Leadership Team Member

“A balance between liberty and equality (one can actually cancel out the other when out of balance) and a freedom of expression and of participation.”

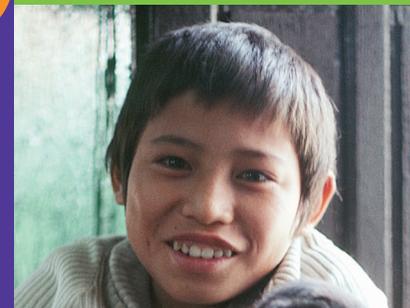
**Moraig Henderson**

Deputy Chief  
UNDP

“The respect of human dignity and of all human rights; meaningful participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the policies and programs that affect our lives.”

**Cristina Diez Saguillo**

Director of International Relations  
Training  
International Movement Atd Fourth  
World



“**Empowerment** can be understood in two different dimensions: 1. to develop the competences and capacities of individuals: to educate and to qualify individuals, special target groups such as children, women, elderly persons and / or families to improve their skills and knowledge so that they are able to generate income and improve the quality of their everyday live and can contribute to the development of the society. 2.The means to develop / to enable the preconditions for individuals: basic requirements such as peace, gender equality, human rights, or available food, access to land and micro credits or adequate education systems are necessary to enable individuals, special target groups such as women, elderly persons and / or families to improve their wellbeing.”

**Anne v. Laufenberg-Beermann**

Executive Director  
International Federation for Home  
Economics



“For me it conjures up images of people gaining greater control of their lives. It is a process that helps to diffuse power at the individual, group and community levels. The **Empowerment** process helps people to develop skills and capacities, build self-confidence and make better decisions thereby improving their life chances and that of succeeding generations.”

**Anthony Pilgrim**  
General Manager  
Barbados Co-operative & Credit Union  
League Ltd.

“I heard about **empowerment** when I was working in the STD/HIV Intervention Program (Durbar Mahila Samanaya Committee), there I worked among the marginalized community/ Sex workers, to make them capable to voice their rights, making them aware about the HIV infection and implementing the preventive measures. They raised their voice to legalize their profession, voting rights and right to healthy living. **Empowerment** means active participation in decision-making, equal opportunity, economic freedom, and the right to give opinion, access to the productive resources that can make enable to increase the earnings. It is giving the strength to fight against any inequalities and getting self-respect and confidence. **Empowerment** help to bring equality, it enhances skills, efficiency, knowledge to overcome any obstacles and to move ahead for development.”

**Nili Majumder**  
VSO UK

“For me, being **empowered** means knowing and trusting that you are in full control of your own destiny. **Empowerment** implies freedom to choose without fear.”

**Claudia LaRue**  
First Secretary  
The Dominican Republic Permanent  
Mission to the United Nations

“**Empowerment** means to enrich people with basic skills of livelihood through education, providing skilled based training to earn livelihood, **empowering** basic knowledge about health, hygiene and education to those underprivileged section of the society whose right is to get **empowered** with these essential knowledge of leading a better life for a better global world in near future where everyone is equal.”

**Najma Begum**  
Free Lancer  
Radio Jockey

“To me the term **Empowerment** means that an individual or the community having power and being able to use the power in a creative way that enables a qualitative life for oneself, community and the whole world including the Planet Earth.”

**Fatima Rodrigo**  
International Presentation Association  
of the Sisters of the Presentation of  
the Blessed Virgin Mary

“**Empowerment** is gaining more economic independence and having a broader control over one’s own destiny. Having a true voice in your future and that of your family and community. Gaining hope.”

**Thomas Thorfinnson**  
Past Vice President  
Rotary International



“**Empowerment** is the expansion of freedom of choice and action. It means increasing one’s authority and control over the resources and decisions that affect one’s life. As people exercise real choice, they gain increased control over their lives. Poor people’s choices are extremely limited, both by their lack of assets and by their powerlessness to negotiate better terms for themselves with a range of institutions, both formal and informal. Since powerlessness is embedded in the nature of institutional relations, in the context of poverty reduction an institutional definition of **Empowerment** is appropriate. The term **empowerment** has different meanings in different sociocultural and political contexts, and does not translate easily into all languages. An exploration of local terms associated with **Empowerment** around the world always leads to lively discussion. These terms include self-strength, control, self-power, self-reliance,

own choice, life of dignity in accordance with one’s values, capable of fighting for one’s rights, independence, own decision making, being free, awakening, and capability—to mention only a few. These definitions are embedded in local value and belief systems.”

**Henry Oriokot**

“**Empowerment** is utilizing the skills, knowledge and confidence. You have to make choices to maximize opportunities that help you to realize your potential. No one can **empower** someone else, it is something you have to do for yourself, but others can help facilitate the process or support you to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence that you need to be **empowered**. Being **empowered** is the ability to dream dreams and strive, over all the odds, to make those dreams reality.”

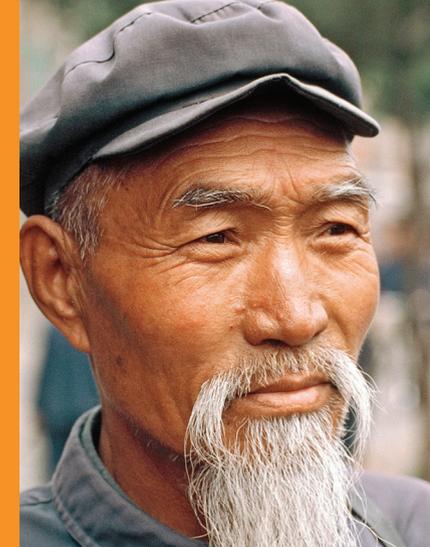
**Sian Arulanantham**  
The Leprosy Mission

“When I hear the word **Empowerment** it means that I have been given the tools, education, and support to accomplish my goals. When I am empowered, I can accomplish these things on my own without any major outside support, thus gaining the ability to feel good about my accomplishments.”

**Brianna Plaza**  
Development and Communications  
Specialist  
International Institute of Rural  
Reconstruction

“**Empowerment** means to help others in the community to adopt simple but powerful skills that helps them to change the quality of their lives, it also makes them take the responsibility and have an active role in the society in a sustainable way. All this will lead to build a better world and make a positive difference.”

**Zahra Hedaiety**  
Executive Manager  
Bahrain Women Association



“**Empowerment** means enabling someone to become all and everything he or she was meant to be. It means helping an individual develop self-worth, self-confidence, self-reliance and independence in such a way as to live meaningfully and peacefully.”

**Maris Korb**  
Sister  
Presentation Sisters of the Blessed  
Virgin Mary

“Post- 2015 Global Development Framework should be **empowerment**-focused. Steps should be taken to ensure that people, especially those most-affected, have power. Nobody could be more interested in ensuring the implementation of the MDGs than people themselves. They are the ultimate stakeholders in the process. If only people are powerful they will ensure that their problems are solved. The power should include governance power and political power. Power in terms of an ongoing say on how they are governed and how decisions and laws that affect their lives are made. This will not come about until people have on-going forums where they could influence decisions and policies. Unfortunately no such forums are available for people. The present forums for participation – parliamentary constituencies, legislative constituencies - are too big to be handled by the poor and the affected. The bigger

a forum becomes the more it becomes the game of bigger voices. The small voices go unattended and drowned. The need is for small-sized forums of governance participation and political participation. These forums have to be accessible to people and include all. Hence they have to be neighborhood-based. We could call them neighborhood communities, neighborhood sabhas (assemblies), neighborhood parliaments or so. We could get them federated at various levels like that of the village, panchayat, block, district, state and the nation. Taking special care to ensure that at each level of the federation, they continue to remain small-sized face-to-face communities. By small-sized face-to face forums, I mean forums where people could all sit together in one circle and talk without a microphone. In such a forum everybody, even the last and the least, will have a face, a name, an identity, attention and scope to participate. Everybody’s

tears will be noticed and responded to. It is crucial that the first level forum (i.e. neighborhood forum), especially, remains accessible to, and within the grip of, the people at the base. If they lost grip on the very first forum of participation, and control, they have lost control on the entire process. They will end up as mere helpless and passive observers. Being small-sized the forums at every level can have also an additional advantage in the above-mentioned multi-tier federated structure. When any representative elected from one level of the federation to the level immediately above doesn’t measure up to the expectations, they can immediately recall the person and send someone else any day without the mind-boggling election expenses associated with elections in big constituencies. Thus the whole system could remain answerable to the people at the base. “

**Edwin John**  
Neighborhood Community Network



“Supporting all persons in basic human dignity through each ones access to participation, decision making, education, being able to share in the benefits of society.”

Clare Nolan  
International Justice Peace Training Facilitator  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd

“Building capacity in others to find their voice and take ownership for themselves and their future by providing them with the skills and education that they need to do this.”

**Paulette LoMonaco**  
Executive Director  
Good Shepherd Services

“**Empowerment** means helping people to participate fully in the production, culture, economy, and governance of the communities, state, and world in which they live.”

**Rudy Cypser**  
Newsletter Editor, UN Representative  
Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants

“**Empowerment** is the process of allowing others the opportunity to have input and decision making. It means a leader should not tell others what needs to be done, but a leader should seek input from different stakeholders to develop a consensus and respect the process as positive and useful. **Empowering** others means a leader gives up some sense of power but a leader enjoys more power gaining respect and appreciation from others.”

**Sharon Hatten**  
UN Committee Chair and Board Member  
Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW)

“When I hear the term “**empowerment**” it means the ability to achieve what is necessary, according to my state in life in a constitutionally formed democratic society, to live socially and productively in a society without fear and to be encouraged by the society to work for and encourage the common good of all its citizens.”

**Gloria Coleman**  
Educator  
Society of the Holy Child Jesus

“**Empowerment** can be defined in many ways, but for me it means motivation; increase of knowledge and education; recognition and application of the basic rights; and also it means the psychological and physical boost...”

**Ediola Pashollari**  
Secretary General  
World Assembly of Youth

“**Empowerment** means to me the people who are finding a way to reach their potential. When they understand their rights and duties and start acting the way that they could achieve them. It’s understanding and acting.”

**Joel Kumpulainen**

“**Empowerment** means that an individual can make choices and decisions for himself. Having the power to decide whether to accept the status quo or being able to create change. Education is the key to **empowerment**. Communication is another key. “

**Judith Horowitz**  
World Council of Conservative/  
Masorti Judaism



“The term “**empowerment**” is a psycho-social term which stands for emancipation and liberation of people in different aspects of life. Empowerment aims to bring the weaker sections of the society for instance minorities and women on an equal plane with others, so that they can exercise their choices in life as freely as majority of the population. **Empowerment** is especially relevant in a democratic setup like India for enforcing Fundamental Rights of equality. Weaker and more vulnerable sections of the society can be **empowered** through policy formulations and subsequently their enforcement through formation of Constitutional laws and rules. One recent example is the Right to Education in Section 21 A of our Indian Constitution.”

**Dr. N.K. Chadha**  
Head of Department  
Department of Psychology,  
University of Delhi

“**Empowerment** means giving people the tools and knowledge they need to be able to act on their own to make truly informed decisions about what is going on in their lives. People who do not know what their rights are often intimidated into giving up things that they are entitled to keep (e.g. possession of an apartment until a court orders them to leave). If someone decides to leave after knowing what her rights are, because that is the right choice for her to make based on all the circumstances of her living situation, it will at least be a knowing decision made not from fear, but from choice.”

**Kathleen Flaherty**  
Staff Attorney  
Statewide Legal Services of CT, Inc.

“People finding their own voice, recognizing the existing problems and trying to have an influence on changing certain situations. To find one’s own voice takes education, formal or informal, and/or mentoring.”

**Diane DalleMolle**  
Sister  
Cabrimi Ministries, Swaziland

“The World Bank’s definition: “**Empowerment** is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.” resonates with me. The World Bank goes on to define the capacities of individuals and groups as assets. **Empowerment** is more than asset; it is a function of a system that values all players as capable decisions makers.”

**Ryan Smith**  
Presbyterian Representative to the United Nations  
Presbyterian Church (USA)

“**Empowerment** means enabling individuals and groups to achieve highest potential by removing barriers and increasing assets. Assets include general and specific knowledge, skills and practices that may be applied across a range of challenging situations. For instance, providing equal access to public education for all learners is necessary to build a competent workforce. A second example is training all to become effective self-advocates, who access and apply health information and obtain clinical care to enhance well-being and decrease illness. Individuals should not suffer discrimination based on age, gender, income, health status, physical or mental abilities.”

**Brian Geiger**  
Professor  
American Association for Health Education



“**Empowerment** for me means several things:  
- Allowing communities to have more control on their destiny by being able to decide what is good and appropriate for them and their needs, to what extent solutions brought forward by external partners are relevant to their needs, aspirations and values. - Enabling the most vulnerable groups to have access to basic services, to have equal opportunities, to be feel valued and included and to be able to participate in decisions affecting their lives. - Giving people a voice and the capacity of influencing policies.”

**Dieudonne Mouafo**  
Chief, Evaluation Unit  
United Nations Volunteers

“**Empowerment** means:  
1. Enabling human beings to reach their full potential;  
2. Taking away barriers that prevent them from being all that they can be;  
3. Maximizing what they can be and do for their own benefit and for that of society.”

**Michele Morek**  
Coalition Coordinator  
Director, UNANIMA International

“The ELISAN network emphasizes the need to combine the concept of solidarity with the concept of subsidiarity. In this optic the term “**Empowerment**” is considered as a personal condition that enables an



individual to take active part in any aspect of his life in the society. It refers to giving the possibilities to a member of the society, in term of personal abilities and knowledge, to have an opinion on more subjects, may they be civil and political, and to be able to support that opinion in the appropriate place through the best means that can be given at his disposition by the authorities. **Empowering** people means to let them have the full responsibility of their future, achievable through the possibility of using all the valuable means. Moreover, **empowering** people means to provide them with knowledge and skills, in order to have the chance to aspire and actually have a better life, both at work and in the personal sphere. The Veneto Regional Ministry on Social Services and the Regional Observatory on Social Policies, a technical-scientific support body for

the development of social policies, are actively involved with the European networks operating in the fields of empowerment policies, social cohesion, integration and education: actually, the Veneto Region is holding the presidency of ELISAN (European Local Inclusion and Social Action network) and the general coordination of ENSA (European Network of Social Authorities), both operating with European local authorities for the social cohesion and cooperation in Europe. Within this framework, the activity of ELISAN, as well as the activity of Veneto Region in the field of social policies, is fully in line with the Europe 2020 strategy, focused on five ambitious goals in the areas of employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction and climate/energy.”

**Mario Modolo**  
Director of Social Services  
Veneto Region - Direction of Social Services - Presidency of Elisan network



“**Empowerment** means that a person can chart their own course, no matter where they live, what they look like, or how their brain is wired [e.g. Asperger’s] and so forth. It means that opportunities exist for everyone to find out how they fit and belong in the world, to find out where they shine the best, and to contribute to the world and earn a living. It means that we treat each other with respect, we teach each other, we focus on the best qualities that the other person has. It means one can go to school and not be bullied or belittled, work and not be shamed for every error, and honored for our talents, without needing to be perfect.”

**Arlene Sobhani**  
Registered Nurse



“**Empowerment** is giving people who are marginalized and even disenfranchised not only a voice, but the means to determine their own development. Enabling others to live up to their potential. This term may be applied to efforts by individuals to join with others to strive for greater social justice for a group or individuals. It may be applied to individuals or organizations that work with the “powerless” in their own area or nation to enable them to attain their potential legally and socially. It involves being with the people and assisting their efforts by guidance and expertise. It does not mean controlling the process.”

Philomena Grimley, Mary T. Currie and Mary Frances Nevins  
Sisters  
Society of the Holy Child Jesus

“When I hear the term “**empowerment**” I think that there are people who want and need the power to achieve goals...the power to be FREE to pursue those goals in their lives... **empowerment** is the taking of those steps that will help the poor, the needy, the immigrant, to achieve their goals. To be free to pursue those goals. “To **empower**” someone is to take those steps to help the “other” be free. I also think that the term may be misleading. The people we are trying to “**empower**” already have that power to achieve and be free. The real question seems to be this. How do we help others to realize that they are already empowered?”

Marianne McGowan  
Education Coordinator  
Cabriní Immigrant Services

“Ability to stand and fight for what is yours. Ability to make own decisions. Ability to say Yes or No. Ability to demand for services from Government. Ability to contribute meaningfully to your community. To be in control of issues or challenges that affects you. Not depending on others; having self power and self strength; living a life of dignity.”

Nyesigomwe Lydia  
Parenting Uganda

“Instilling in a person the awareness that they have the ability to take on tasks, to make a difference, to be an example to others, to contribute their talents to a cause that can benefit others. An important component of **empowerment** is education.”

Kathleen Ries  
Board President  
Unanima International





Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Division for Social Policy and Development

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